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U.S. Bureau of Plant Industry, Soils, and Agricultural Engineering Division of forage crops and diseases

FORAGE for FALL FEEDING

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THE MORE LIVESTOCK FEED available, the greater the possibility of producing such concentrated foods as meat and milk. The more home-grown roughage that can be conserved and utilized, the more animals can be kept going even though concentrates sometimes become scarce. Much roughage is grown with a minimum of labor in land preparation, cultivation, and harvesting—an important factor under wartime conditions, when all hands are needed every day. In general, the longer the farmer can keep using good outdoor roughage, the better, since stored roughage represents the expenditure of much labor.

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SUPPLEMENTAL PASTURES

A great deal of convincing evidence is available on the value of supplemental pastures. A survey of 100 dairy farms in Indiana showed that farmers using fall-sown grains for late fall and early spring pasture saved $25 to $100 a farm in barn feeding. In Tennessee more than 100 days a year of extra grazing has been obtained by each of the farmers using temporary pastures. In Louisiana the average value of winter and summer temporary pasture crops was $15.77 per acre per year.

CONSERVING WINTER FEEDS

There are many ways of increasing supplies of such feed for winter use and still other ways of using fall feed to save other roughage supplies for winter. The possibilities here briefly outlined are some of the more readily available means that can be adopted by resourceful farmers.

SOWING SMALL GRAINS AND OTHER ANNUALS

A common and effective means of increasing fall grazing is to sow small grains and other annuals. It may prevent overgrazing and thus conserve permanent pastures. These small grains can be sown alone or in combination with ryegrass or with vetch, crimson clover, or other winter annual legumes. This method is suitable in many situations, some of which are emphasized in the following paragraphs.

In Soybean Stubble

Harvested soybean fields make up a large area since this crop has become popular. These fields offer opportunities to sow winter grains, particularly rye, for fall and spring pasture. In some cases the fields could be kept for a grain crop.

In Corn Rows

Late in August and in September, seedings of small grains alone or with ryegrass can be made in the corn rows for late-fall and spring pasture.

In Corn Stubble

Seeding corn stubble is often a good way to get space for extra fall and spring pasture. The opportunity is especially good where corn is cut for the silo, since it is off the ground earlier.

On Flooded Lands

Where a crop was destroyed by floodwaters, fields that have been temporarily out of production part of the summer can be used for fall and spring pasture or for a hay crop by sowing small grains or grain and ryegrass in August or later. In such cases in the Southeast, grains or ryegrass can be sown in a mixture with crimson clover, vetch, or Persian clover.

AFTERMATH

To conserve permanent pasture for late fall grazing many farmers can make special efforts to use meadow aftermath, either as pasture, where there are fences or where temporary ones can be provided, or as hay, when labor is available to put it up. Sufficient growing time must be left after cutting, however, for the meadow to go into winter with a protective growth of 4 or 5 inches. This aftergrowth is especially desirable where meadows contain a high percentage of alfalfa or Ladino clover.

OTHER METHODS

Other supplemental pasture crops or methods of management of pastures to conserve concentrates and maintain production of beef and milk are as follows:

Fertilizing Permanent Pasture

Fertilizing is one of the most effective ways of increasing pasture production. To stimulate permanent pastures so that they will take heavier fall grazing, a top dressing of nitrogen fertilizer is practical. Such treatment early in September will boost the growth of grass 4 to 6 weeks. It is a particularly good plan for dairymen who need to conserve all possible feed for winter. South of Pennsylvania, such pastures are useful far into October. Farther north, stock cattle can be left out on such grazing that late or sometimes even later. The War Food Administration has indicated that there are ample supplies of nitrogen and phosphate fertilizers for pasture crops. In using it, farmers should follow the recommendations of State agricultural experiment stations as to analyses and applications.

Controlled Grazing

On beef-cattle farms or where horses or sheep have been grazed, late fall and early winter pasture can be used to advantage, even though the feed is of rather low grade. If stalks and aftermath can be substituted, permanent pasture can be rested and built up so as to provide late fall and even early winter grazing.

Fencing

The use of temporary fences, including electric fences, makes it feasible to utilize much forage that would otherwise go to waste in draws or grassy areas in cultivated fields, meadows, and in stalk fields and stubblefields.

Supplemental Silage

In wet weather a late hay crop may be saved by cutting it for the silo. The cut grass can be added to a silo containing corn, grass, sorghum, clover, or other silage.

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